

## **Newton Main Street Wins State Recognition**

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NEWTON -- The town of Newton will be ringing in the new year with some good news.

"We have officially been notified that Newton has received its designation as a New Jersey Main Street," said Carola Hartley, executive director of Main Street Newton, Inc.

Newton officials were notified Friday that of the six finalists, Newton and Somerville were chosen to join 26 towns in the state with Main Street designations.

"We're very excited," said Newton Town Manager Eileen Kithcart. "It is the absolute finalization of what we thought was going to happen. I would like to give special thanks to Carola Hartley for pulling it all together. It's a win-win situation for the town, county and merchants involved."

The designation will put Newton on the fast track for grant applications, Hartley said.

"We will be even bigger and better," said Mayor Thea Unhoch, "and the best thing is it will revitalize the entire town, not just Spring Street. More people will want to open businesses and shops and restaurants."

Main Street New Jersey is a comprehensive revitalization program that promotes the historic and economic redevelopment of traditional business districts in New Jersey.

Every two years the DCA accepts applications and designates selected communities to join the program. These communities receive technical support and training to assist in restoring their Main Streets as centers of community and economic activity.

Of this round's six finalists, Newton and Somerville received the Traditional Main Street New Jersey designation, while Caldwell, Maple Shade, Montclair and Orange received the Partner level designation.

Traditional designations are given to towns that are ranked the highest during the application process and already have full-time staffing for the downtown.

Partner designations are given to towns whose focus will be mostly on organization, development, growth and awareness in the initial year.

If they receive a successful review after the first year, Partners can move up to Traditional designation.

Newton's Main Street project began about two years ago with a grassroots effort. In the summer, the program hired Hartley, who has about 20 years experience in downtown revitalization, as its executive director.

Earlier this month, a team from the Division of Community Resources took an hour-long tour along Spring Street, talking to business owners, and then met with Sussex County and Newton government and civic leaders.

"This is a wonderful way to end the old year and begin the new year," Unhoch said. "I think it's absolutely fantastic. I never had any doubt. The news is simply fantastic."

Department of Community Affairs' Acting Commissioner Joseph Doria said the Main Street program is a tool that can help municipalities across the state. "I congratulate these six towns for their initiative to revitalize the heart of their communities and provide better lives for their residents and more commerce for their businesses by working with the Main Street program," he said.

Applications for the Main Street program were reviewed and ranked by a panel comprised of members from numerous state agencies and local MSNJ executive directors from successful local Main Street programs.

The applications were ranked based on how well they fit into six categories: public and private sector understanding, cooperation and financial capacity; local organizational readiness; physical and historic character of core built environment and efforts to preserve and enhance; need for downtown revitalization and potential for effecting positive change; municipal government profile/past efforts; and community profile.

"I would like to thank anybody and everybody who's been a member of various committees that made this a dream come true." Unhoch said.